

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6798
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C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT LOUIS 0659

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SUBJECT: MAURITIUS WEEKLY REVIEW - JUNE 17, 1977

REF: PORT LOUIS 624

SUMMARY. PORT LOUIS 0658 PROVIDES A SUMMARY OF THIS CABLE.
END SUMMARY.

1. THE COUP D'ETAT IN THE SEYCHELLES WAS STILL REVERBERATING
IN MAURITIUS THIS WEEK. THE NEWSPAPER, WEEKEND, OF 12 JUNE
CARRIED A NUMBER OF COMMENTS ON THE COUP FROM PROMINENT PEOPLE
WHO ARE NOT SUBJECT TO THE MUZZLING ORDER ISSUED BY ACTING
PRIME MINISTER BOOLELL (REFTEL). THE LEADERSHIP OF THE
MAURITIAN MILITANT MOVEMENT-SOCIALIST PROGRESSIVE PARTY
(MMM-SP), USING CHINESE COMMUNIST TERMINOLOGY, SAW THE CHANGE
IN THE SEYCHELLES AS ADVANCING THE "SOCIAL IMPERIALISM" OF
THE SOVIETS, WHO WISH TO SUPPLANT THE "DECADENT POWER OF
AMERICAN IMPERIALISM" IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. THE MMM-SP WARNED
THAT BY SUCH MEANS THE USSR IS TRYING TO EXTEND ITS HEGEMONY
OVER ALL OF AFRICA AND ALSO EUROPE. IT PREDICTED THAT THE
SEYCHELLES EVENTS WILL CAUSE RAMGOOLAM TO THROW HIMSELF
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COMPLETELY INTO THE ARMS OF THE WEST.

2. GUY OLLIVRY OF THE MAURITIAN DEMOCRATIC UNION (UDM)
DEPLORED THE ENTHUSIASM WITH WHICH PAUL BERENGER AND THE
MAURITIAN MILITANT MOVEMENT (MMM) GREETED THE OVERTHROW BY
FORCE OF THE SEYCHELLES GOVERNMENT. HE OPPOSED THE USE
OF FORCE AGAINST ANY GOVERNMENT EXCEPT AS A LAST RESORT

AGAINST AN ILLEGITIMATE ONE.

3. AN INFORMAL POLL OF THE "MAN IN THE STREET" BY THE PAPER REVEALED THAT MOST MAURITIANS WERE SURPRISED BY THE COUP, ARE UNHAPPY ABOUT IT, AND DOUBT THAT A SIMILAR THING COULD HAPPEN HERE "WE'RE TOO CIVILIZED" WAS A TYPICAL COMMENT).

4. WEEKEND'S EDITOR, LINDSAY RIVIERE, NORMALLY SYMPATHETIC TO THE LEFT, CAME OUT FIRMLY AGAINST THE COUP, NOTING THAT RENE HAD VIOLATED THE CONSTITUTION IN FACT WHILE CLAIMING THAT MANCHAM INTENDED TO DO SAME I ANSWER TO THE MMM, WHICH WELCOMED THE "TURN TO THE LEFT" IN THE SEYCHELLES, RIVIERE REMARKED THAT WHENEVER A MAN OF THE LEFT OVERTHROWS A RIGHTIST REGIME IT IS CALLED "PROGRESS IN THE PATH OF SOCIALISM," BUT WHEN A RIGHTIST OVERTHROWS A LEFTIST REGIME IT IS LABELLED A "HISTORICAL SETBACK" AND "REACTIONARY" DEVELOPMENT. RIVIERE DEPLORED ALL COUPS D'ETAT AS WRONG.

5. THE MMM PAPER, LE MILITANT, OF JUNE 11 REPORTED THAT RAMGOOLAM, RINGADOO AND WALTER CALLED ON MANCHAM AT HIS HOTEL IN LONDON. THE PAPER LABELED THIS A DIPLOMATIC "FAUX PAS." THE PAPER ALSO TOOK WALTER TO TASK FOR HIS BBC INTERVIEW, IN WHICH THE FOREIGN MINISTER "JUSTIFIED" THE DIEGO GARCIA BASE, SAID CRITICISM SHOULD INSTEAD BE DIRECTED AT THE RUSSIAN PRESENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN, AND TOOK A STRONGLY ANTI-RENE TONE IN SPEAKING ABOUT THE SYECHELLES. THE PAPER CHARGED THAT THE FAILURE OF THE GOM TO RECOGNIZE THE RENE REGIME IN THE SYECHELLES PROMPTLY -- BEING SLOWER THAN EVEN THE UK AND THE U.S. -- WAS A BITTER DEFEAT FOR MAURITIAN DIPLOMACY.

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6. TWO DAYS LATER LE MILITANT ASSERTED THAT RAMGOOLAM ON LEARNING OF THE SEYCHELLES COUP HAD BEEN SEIZED BY A PANIC OF FEAR OF A POSSIBLE COUP D'ETAT IN MAURITIUS COMING EITHER FROM THE MMM OR FROM MEMBERS OF HIS OWN GOVERNMENT. THE PAPER CLAIMED HE ORDERED POLICE COMMISSIONER FULENA AND SECURITY ADVISER REWCASTLE TO PLACE ALL SORTS OF PEOPLE UNDER SURVEILLANCE AND TO REPORT TO HIM DAILY IN LONDON ON THE INTERNAL SECURITY SITUATION. ALL OF THIS SHOWED HOW FEEBLE AND UNPOPULAR HIS GOVERNMENT IS, THE MMM PAPER CLAIMED. THE GOVERNMENT WAS SO FEARFUL, IT SAID, THAT LAST SATURDAY POLICE "BRUTALLY INTERRUPTED" A MMM "IDEOLOGICAL MEETING" OF THIRTY PEOPLE AND BRIEFLY DETAINED MMM DEPUTY DARGA AND SOME OTHER MMM MILITANTS. THERE IS NOTHING TO FEAR FROM THE MMM, ACCORDING TO LE MILITANT, FOR THE PARTY WILL TAKE POWER BY WINNING THE NEXT ELECTIONS AND THEREFORE A MMM COUP D'ETAT MAKES NO SENSE.

7. THE FOLLOWING DAY LE CERNEEN REPORTED THAT TWO OF THE

PEOPLE ARRESTED WITH DARGA WERE TANZANIANS, WHO FLED THE COUNTRY BY PLANE AFTER THEIR RELEASE. THE PAPER POINTED TO THE "TANZANIAN CONNECTION" OF THE COUP D'ETAT IN THE SYCHELLES, A REFERENCE TO THE TRAINING IN TANZANIA RECEIVED BY SOME OF RENE'S "SIXTY RIFLES" WHO PERPETRATED THE COUP. (LE MILITANT LATER MAINTAINED THAT THE "TWO TANZANIANS" WERE A UGANDAN ASIAN EXILED PROFESSOR AND HIS WIFE LIVING IN TANZANIA SINCE BEING THROWN OUT OF UGANDA BY IDI AMIN. PERSONAL FRIENDS OF AMEDEE DARGA, THEY WERE VISITING HERE WHILE ON VACATION.)

8. LE MAURICIEN SENT ITS OWN REPORTER TO THE SEYCHELLES TO COVER THE POST-COUP SITUATION. HIS INITIAL REPORT SAID EVERYTHING WAS CALM AND THE SEYCHELLOIS HAD ACCEPTED THE CHANGE. IN A BRIEF INTERVIEW RENE TOLD THE REPORTER: "THE ATTITUDE OF THE MAURITIAN GOVERNMENT SURPRISES ME AND IT PROVES THAT IT IS MORE TO THE RIGHT THAN EVER BEFORE."
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THE REPORTER HAD LONGER TALKS WITH HODOUL AND FERRARI, WHO STATED THAT THE COUP WAS DESIGNED TO GIVE THE COUNTRY "TRUE INDEPENDENCE". IN THIS CONNECTION THEY STRESSED THE EXPLUSION OF FOREIGN OFFICIALS AND THE CONVERSION OF THOSE REMAINING INTO "ADVISERS." THE REPORTER NOTED THAT ELECTIONS ARE PROMISED FOR 1979 AND COMMENTED THAT THE TEST FOR THE NEW REGIME WILL BE WHETHER THOSE ELECTIONS WILL BE FREE ONES.

9. LE POPULAIRE, ORGAN OF DUVAL'S PMSD, WAS HIGHLY CRITICAL OF THE SPEED WITH WHICH THE UK, FRANCE AND THE U.S. RECOGNIZED THE NEW SEYCHELLES REGIME OF ALBERT RENE. THE PAPER REMARKED THAT MANCHAM HAD ALWAYS BEEN A CLOSE FRIEND OF THE WESTERN POWERS AND SHOULD NOT BE ABANDONED IN SUCH HASTY FASHION.

10. THE PRESS HERE REPORTED THAT LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION JUGNAUTH TOLD REPORTERS IN LONDON HE APPROVED THE POSITIONS TAKEN AT THE COMMONWEALTH CONFERENCE BY THE GOM ON THE PROBLEMS OF NAMIBIA, ZIMBABWE AND SOUTH AFRICA. HE SAID HE ALSO SUPPORTED THE POSITIONS TAKEN BY THE GOM DELEGATION ON OTHER TOPICS RAISED AT THE CONFERENCE. HE WAS QUOTED AS STATING: "I FOLLOWED THE DEBATES. I WAS GIVEN EVERY FACILITY AND I AM PLEASED WITH THE STANCE TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT."

11. THE UDM SAYS IT PLANS TO LAUNCH A CAMPAIGN IN FAVOR OF THE PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEM IN THE ASSEMBLY, SO THAT ALL INTERESTS IN THE COUNTRY WILL BE REPRESENTED. THE PARTY ALSO CAME OUT AGAINST "CROSSING THE FLOOR" IN THE MANNER OF MOORBA. THE PARTY LEADERSHIP CRITICIZED THE LABOR PARTY FOR COMMUNALISM AND FOR ABANDONING SOCIALISM, THE PMSD FOR HAVING MADE A SECRET ALLIANCE WITH LABOR PRIOR TO THE LAST ELECTIONS, AND

THE MMM FOR BEING A COMMUNIST PARTY WHILE REFUSING TO ADMIT IT.

12. AS THE DAY FOR FILING MAURITIAN INCOME TAX RETURNS
APPROACHES, LE MAURICIEN HAS AN ARTICLE ON THE "SCANDAL"
WHICH PREVAILS IN THIS AREA. THOUGH ANYONE EARNING MORE
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THAN 450 RUPEES A MONTH IS SUPPOSED TO FILE A RETURN, ONLY
ABOUT 25,000 MAURITIANS FILE AND PAY INCOME TAXES, LESS THAN
ONE TWELFTH OF THE LABOR FORCE. THE TAX LAWS ARE SO LAXLY
ENFORCED THAT THE PAPER SAYS IT IS ESSENTIALLY A "VOLUNTARY"
ENDEAVOR. THE GOVERNMENT RAISES 14 PERCENT OF ITS REVENUE
IN THIS MANNER, BUT THE INCOME TAX BURDEN IS VERY UNEVENLY
DISTRIBUTED. IT IS A WELL-KNOWN FACT THAT EVEN THOSE WHO
FILE RETURNS REGULARLY UNDER-REPORT THEIR INCOMES TO AN
EXTREME DEGREE (IF THEY CAN GET AWAY WITH IT, WHICH IS
APPARENTLY EASY).

13. ON THE DIPLOMATIC FRONT A NON-RESIDENT TURKISH AMBASSADOR,
NIHAT DINC, WHO RESIDED IN PAKISTAN, PRESENTED HIS CREDENTIALS
AS THE FIRST ENVOY OF HIS COUNTRY TO MAURITIUS ON JUNE 14.
THE FOLLOWING DAY THE NEW BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER, ALEC
WARD, PRESENTED HIS CREDENTIALS.
KEELEY

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